

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

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SUBJECT: STATE, CHURCH, EDUCATION AND MORALS

REF: (A) KINSHASA A-54; (B) KINSHASA A-225 (DECEMBER 1975)

1. IN LATE AUGUST, PRESIDENT MOBUTU MET WITH THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF BISHOPS OF ZAIRE TO DISCUSS CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS. THIS MEETING, ANNOUNCED PUBLICLY, FOLLOWED EARLIER QUIET INITIATIVES BY THE PRESIDENT TO ENCOURAGE THE CHURCH TO RE-ENTER THE FIELD OF EDUCATION. NO ANNOUNCEMENT OF AN AGREEMENT HAS BEEN FORTHCOMING, HOWEVER. DURING PRESS INTERVIEW AT CONCLUSION OF MEETING CHURCH SPOKESMAN COMMENTED QUESTION WAS UNDER STUDY BUT HE DID NOT COMMIT HIMSELF TO WHAT ACTION CHURCH WOULD TAKE.

2. COMMENT: CHURCH LEADERS ARE HESITANT TO STEP BACK INTO SCHOOL OPERATIONS WITHOUT SPECIFIC GOVERNMENTAL GUARANTEES. THE BISHOPS, FOR INSTANCE, HAVE INDICATED THAT THE CHURCH WOULD BECOME INVOLVED IN SCHOOLING ONLY IF THE GOVERNMENT WOULD RECOGNIZE THE CHURCH'S RIGHT TO MAKE SIGNIFICANT ADMINISTRATIVE DECISIONS AND TO TEACH MORAL AND RELIGIOUS VALUES IN THE SCHOOLS.

3. MOBUTU MAY HAVE TO YIELD ON THESE POINTS. HE IS NOW UNDER CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE TO IMPROVE THE ACADEMIC AND MORAL QUALITY OF THE SCHOOLS. OFFICIALS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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PRIVATELY LAMENT THE DETERIORATION IN ACADEMIC STANDARDS FOR

SECONDARY SCHOOLS; AND THE DAILY PAPER ELIMA PUBLICLY DECRIES THE WANT OF MORAL VALUES AMONG STUDENTS AND PROFESSORS. IN FACT, THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF HAS STATED THAT SEDUCTION OF YOUNG FEMALE STUDENTS BY PROFESSORS IS WIDESPREAD AND MUST BE STOPPED. (MOBUTU'S JUNE 24TH SPEECH)

4. IT IS NATURAL THAT MOBUTU WOULD LOOK NOW TO THE CHURCH FOR SOLUTIONS. IT CAN BRING A VAST AMOUNT OF ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE BACK TO EDUCATION AND, GIVEN GENERAL DEGRADATION OF SCHOOL SYSTEM, MOBUTU LOOKS TO THE CHURCH TO PROVIDE NEEDED FINANCIAL INVESTMENT. FURTHER, THE REINSTATEMENT OF THE CHURCH IN TEACHING WOULD TEND TO CEMENT THE NEW AND MORE CORDIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHURCH THAT MOBUTU HAS SOUGHT TO BUILD WITHIN THE PAST YEAR. ALREADY, MOBUTU HAS RESTORED CARDINAL MALULA TO THE RANKS OF THE ORDER OF THE LEOPARD, HAS NOTIFIED REGIONAL OFFICIALS THAT CHURCHMEN ARE NOT TO BE HARRASSED, AND HAS HAD ONE OF HIS CHILDREN PUBLICLY BAPTIZED. INVITING THE CHURCH BACK INTO SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION WITH NO RESTRICTIONS WOULD MARK A FULL CYCLE OF POLICY CHANGE WITHIN ZAIRE. IN PRACTICAL TERMS, HOWEVER, IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THE CHURCH WILL BE ABLE TO MAKE THE SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENT THAT WOULD BE REQUIRED TO PUT THE ENTIRE CATHOLIC EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM BACK INTO SHAPE. INSTEAD, THE CHURCH WILL PROBABLY CONCENTRATE ON A FEW, KEY SCHOOLS. CUTLER

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